

THE SPIRITUAL IMPROVEMENT
OF THE
ANNUAL OBSERVANCES OF THE CHURCH,
IN THEIR SERIES.

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF QUEBEC,
ON THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT,

CO-INCIDING, UPON THE OCCASION, WITH THE FESTIVAL OF THE
ANNUNCIATION,

1855.

BY

GEORGE J. MOUNTAIN, D. D., D. C. L.,

LORD BISHOP OF QUEBEC.

Published by particular desire.

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THE interchange of complimentary language is not much in its proper place where the preaching of the Word of God is concerned. The author, however, is called upon to make his acknowledgments, and particularly to the gentleman who took the lead in the movement, for the kind expression of a wish on the part of a considerable number of persons in the Cathedral congregation, that the following Sermon should be given to them for publication. It was not with the most distant view to such an object, that the Sermon was prepared by himself; but he is willing to defer to their judgment, and will be thankful if the Sermon is permitted to effect any good.

SERMON.

“And the Angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favor with God.”—*Luke* i. 30.

WE not unfrequently point out from this place,—for, of course, it is one of our standing duties to assist the members of the flock in the intelligent appreciation and spiritual improvement of the course of our services, as they proceed,—that the cycle of our ecclesiastical observances teaches in itself, by their digested series, the great doctrinal truths, and practical lessons of the Christian religion, and constitutes, in a manner, an epitome of the Gospel. We may pass over, upon the present occasion, the *examples* of the power of faith afforded in those among the minor festivals in which we commemorate the holy Apostles, Evangelists and Martyrs for the truth of

God, who are named in his Word ; and in which we follow out, very exactly, the *spirit* of the charge given by St. Paul where he sets before us by name, what he calls *a cloud of witnesses*,* expressly for our encouragement and imitation. But let us not fail to observe that whatever, through the downward tendencies of nature, and the influences of an ungodly world, may be the declensions to which the Church is liable, whatever may be, at any period, the doctrinal deficiency of her ministers, whatever dimness and haze in matters of religious faith and feeling, may, more or less, overspread the minds of her people, still the capital, the cardinal points of the Gospel of Grace can never, by possibility, be lost out of sight. They are the signs of her zodiac ; they come round to view, year by year, in the revolution of the year itself, and are presented periodically to our notice, in the very succession of our appointed solemnities and celebrations. CHRIST is set forth to us in every marked point of his history, and in all the benefits flowing to us from what he has suffered and achieved, if we

* Heb. xii. 1, referring to the whole of the preceding chapter. See also 1 Cor. iv. 16, xi. 1, Phil. iii. 17, 2 Thes. iii. 7-9, Heb. vi. 12, xiii. 7. In the observance, in particular, of *All Saints day*, it always appears to me that we have a pointed instance, upon the principle of *teaching* through the *ordinances* of the Church, of conformity with the object of Heb. xi. and xii. 1.

begin with the yearning expectations connected with his Advent, and end with his triumphant exaltation at *the right hand of the Majesty on high*.* *Advent* opens the ecclesiastical year ; the joy of *Christmas* follows, when we hail, commemoratively, the Saviour born into the world ; we celebrate his *circumcision* on the eighth day ; his *epiphany* or manifestation to the Gentiles, in the persons of the wise men of the East, anticipatory of the extension of the Gospel to all the tribes of the earth alike ; his *presentation* in the temple, again, as in the case of the circumcision, indicating him as, in all points, obedient to the law whose exactions, under every aspect, he was to satisfy on behalf of man. The festival of the *Annunciation*, co-inciding upon the present occasion with the Sunday upon which we are met, belongs, in its chronological relation to the series, to the year which commences with the Advent *following*, being placed at that distance from the *nativity*, which must have been interposed between the visit of the Angel to the Virgin, who was to be a mother, and the actual birth of her blessed Son. The sore discipline of temptation, and the long-enduring fast to which the Saviour was subjected in the wilderness, with all the

*Heb. i. 3.

themes of solemn meditation, and all the lessons of humiliation and watchfulness which they carry, are brought before our minds in the present season of *Lent*; and pave the way for the closing scenes of all, in the mission of the incarnate Son of God upon earth. *Passion-week*, i. e. the week of *suffering*, winds up the season of *Lent*; the sad, the awful, the thrilling scenes of the week are all described in what is largely read to us, day by day, from the Word of God, in our worship, as always, at whatever season of observance, appropriate selections from that Word are set before the Church. And here we reach the point at which our observances fall upon the real and unquestionably ascertained anniversaries of the events which we celebrate.* The *crucifixion* took place on *Friday* at the season of the Jewish

* God having, in the harmonized distributions of his eternal wisdom, ordained that certain marked events of the Christian dispensation should co-incide, in the season of their occurrence, with the annual solemnities of the Jewish Church by which they were prefigured, there does appear to be a call made upon us to notice those seasons when they present themselves. I do not enter into a question which is known to have been raised, whether *Christmas* falls or not upon the real anniversary of the birth of Christ;—supposing, *argumenti gratiâ*, that it does *not*, we should still do rightly in keeping an edifying and devotional observance, which rests purely and simply upon ancient precedent and ecclesiastical authority. Doddridge, who often shows himself a candid dissenter, makes the following observations upon John x. 22, where Christ is spoken of as attending the *winter* festival of the dedication: “It is worthy of remark that we here see *Our Lord Jesus* at a festival appointed only by human authority, in commemoration of a national deliverance.”

Passover : the body of the Redeemer lay in the grave during the whole of Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath; and on the first day of the week following, (our *Easter day*,) He broke, by the energy of His own divine power, the bars of the prison of death, and rose the conqueror alike of death and of *him that had the power of death, i.e. the Devil*.* So, correspondently, the glorious *ascension* of the Son of God, the celebration of which ought to be regarded among us as a high and sacred festival, and the effusion of the Holy Ghost in all the plenitude of miraculous power, on the day of *Pentecost*, (with us *Whit-Sunday*,) are both commemorated at the actual season of their occurrence.† And all these major observances, from Christmas to Whitsuntide inclusive, as well as, in certain instances, the minor ones also, are found retained in the Churches of the Reformation at large, over Continental Europe.

The *doctrines* of the Gospel are interwoven, and, in a manner, identified with its *facts*, and its appeals to the human heart and understanding are one with the prominent points of its

* Heb. ii. 14.

† *Trinity Sunday*, standing out to exhibit in bold relief, a grand and vital truth of our religion, and made the point of departure for a long line of Sundays which follow, closes with evident propriety those consecutive observances in which the great concluding acts of the history of Christ and the marked display of the Holy Ghost, have, in their due order, been commemorated.

history. Here, then, to enumerate some leading examples, we have, in the digested and systematized exhibition of a *series of facts*, the *mystery of godliness** in the *Incarnation* of Christ to make peace between God and sinful man ; the power, malignity, and subtlety of the *Tempter*, the original author of our fall, with the dangers against which we have to watch and pray, in this behalf ; the wondrous testimony rendered, in the *blood-shedding* of the last and only availing victim for sin, to the depravity of our nature, charged with ruin to our souls, and, in conjunction with this, to the boundless love and mercy of our God ; the certainty of the happy *resurrection* of true believers, pledged to us in that of our representative, the *Second Adam*, and the obligation which lies upon us to *die*, already, *to sin*, and rise again to *newness of life* ; † the promise of a place reserved for us in glory, which Christ has *gone to prepare*, ‡ and the necessity, in our own preparation here, of actually, fixedly and fervently, *setting our affection on things above* ; § and, finally, the descent of the Spirit of God upon this lower world, flashing upon the human mind, in the commencement of the Gos-

* 1 Tim. iii. 16.

† Rom. vi., *passion*.

‡ John xiv. 2.

§ Col. iii. 2.

pel, an overpowering conviction, in broad, miraculous display, but pouring continuously through successive ages,—flowing and to flow to the end of all time,*—the streams of light and life—making the heart of man, naturally *desert*, as regards all fruit of heavenly grace, to *rejoice* in holiness, and the *wilderness* of his unreclaimed temper and wasted energy, to *blossom as the rose*,† in the loveliness of Christian obedience and the fragrancy of accepted faith.

These, my brethren, are the lessons—not, taught by these means alone, nor left untaught wherever our customs are not kept—let us not *judge another man's servant*,‡—but these are the lessons fastened upon us in the stated reiteration of our different services; and we may be thankful for our opportunities, remembering also that we are answerable to improve them for our spiritual good. The particular observance which, upon the present occasion, has suggested the choice of our subject, presents an interesting picture before our eyes. It is the announcement suddenly made by an express messenger

* *Labitur et labetur in omne volubilis ævum.—Hor.*

† *Is. xxxv. 1.*

‡ *Rom. xiv. 4.* I speak this in the sense of our own 34th Article of Religion;—not intending to be understood as leaving the door open to the introduction, *ad libitum*, of new ministries and modes of worship among men, by irregular and irresponsible hands.

from the regions of light, to a human being,—a lowly, retired, and modest virgin,—that it was she who was now to bear and bring into the world the *seed of the woman* promised from the beginning to *bruise the Serpent's head*,*—the spiritual *David*,† who springing lineally, after the flesh, from that earthly monarch, should rule for ever, the Israel of God. We have described to us, in a few simple touches, the perturbation of her feelings upon the first appearance and salutation of the angel; the re-assuring language which he addresses to her; then the perplexity of her mind as to the manner in which such a thing could, in her case, be possible; and, finally, upon its being explained to her as an act of the power of God, her devout, humble, and confiding acquiescence.

Hail thou that art highly favored, says the angel. . . . *blessed art thou among women*; and again, *Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favor with God*. So Elizabeth, upon receiving the salutation of Mary, exclaims, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, *Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb*. And so the Virgin says of herself, in her hymn of thanksgiving, that *all generations should call her blessed*. ‡

* Gen. iii. 15.

† Luke i. 32.

‡ Luke i. 28-48.

Are we, then, to infer from these expressions, that the Virgin Mary was originally, or was constituted by any exercise of Divine power or act of Divine authority, a being of a different order from other human beings, and that she is to be honored with any kind of religious worship, modified or otherwise?

My brethren, it is needless to say that our very observances, in which, in her connection with Christ, the Virgin Mary is remembered,—at once, and upon the face of them, repudiate such an idea; and, as I have pointed out upon occasion of some other commemorative observances, the *retention* of the observance with the *retrenchment* of all homage rendered to the subject,—in this instance the secondary and subordinate subject of it,—(such homage being the prerogative of God alone), is a *testimony against* the superstitious corruption of misplaced worship or forbidden invocation.* It seems as if we hardly need controvert, with the Bible, the book of God, before our eyes, such flagrant deviations from its teaching, as those which are here in question; and from all *unnecessary* controversy, it is certainly a wise and Christian part to abstain. There are

* This remark will apply also to our festival of St. Michael and all Angels, which keeps before the eyes of the Church an interesting and important feature of our divine religion, *excluding*, at the same time, the practice forbidden, Col. ii. 18, and elsewhere.

some persons in the world, who love controversy for controversy's sake, and who, without being in the least danger of being drawn over to a system of superstition,—holding it in utter and determined abhorrence in all its parts, and wanting no relief from any doubt upon the subject,—not requiring, in the slightest degree, to be fortified in their own professed and distinctive principles,—not having reason to fear any desertion of consequence, from their own ranks, nor expecting, certainly, through the medium of our pulpits, to gain deserters from the other side,—are still uneasy, and think that we are not good Protestants, unless we are perpetually and violently assailing the Church of Rome. Such persons ought never to be gratified. The lesson which they particularly want, and which it is the part of a faithful pastor to dispense to them, is a lesson of quite another kind. Nevertheless, my brethren, since we are upon the subject of the Virgin Mary, and since the recent promulgation at Rome, of an extraordinary and monstrous dogma* in relation to her, is a most remarkable feature of the times,—and the more closely we consider it in all its circumstantial aspects, the more strikingly shall we perceive it to be so,—

* The dogma relative to the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary.

since, also, we do live (in Lower Canada) in a Roman Catholic country, and the dogma in question is ventilated on all sides of us every day,—I think it may be right that, in all that charity of spirit which is the best preparation for discerning and settling the truth, and leaving unharmed and uninterrupted, our courteous and kindly intercourse in common life, with those of another faith, we should briefly consider the means which are in our hands,—for, thank God, the Bible is there,—of absolutely oversetting any such supposition as that the Virgin is to be regarded as anything more than an ordinary, although a singularly privileged, woman.

It is not, indeed, a very laborious or intricate inquiry. If there is any one thing plain in the Bible, it is surely plain that any kind of religious worship whatever, offered to any other being than GOD THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE HOLY GHOST, is solemnly forbidden,—and the more strongly and severely, on account of the proneness of the world—we see it exemplified under both covenants—to error in this point; the proclivity of man, in the debasement of his nature, where he makes a religion for himself, to multiply his objects of worship, with the kindred sin of framing sensible representations of deity, and

where he enjoys Revelation, to adulterate it by a progressive accumulation of tenets and practices which are either directly borrowed from the fabricators of false religions, or framed, from time to time, as new additions of human device to the true.

*Thou shalt have no other Gods before me.**

We make a god of whatever is an object of religious homage; and this commandment, levelled more immediately against the heathen mythology and worship, in which *there be gods many and lords many*,† in different gradations of deity, and with differing attributes, forbids our recognition of any other object as having a claim to such homage, than the living Jehovah. *I am God, and there is none else.‡ My glory will I not give to another.§ Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.|| There is one God and one Mediator between God and man,¶* all recourse to other intercessors above, being here forbidden, as again in the words, *No man cometh to the Father but*

* Exod. xx. 3.

† 1 Cor. viii. 5.

‡ Is. xlv. 22. See same chap. 5, 6, 14, 18. Deut. iv. 35, 39. 1 Kings viii. 60. Is. xlvi. 9. Mark xii. 32.

§ Is. xlii. 8; xlviii. 11.

|| Matt. iv. 10. cf. Deut. vi. 13; x. 20. 1 Sam. vii. 3.

¶ 1 Tim. ii. 5.

by me. I am the door. See thou do it not,*—the prohibitory words of an angel of God, when, overcome by a momentary impulse, the Apostle St. John would have unduly honored him,—*See thou do it not. . . . WORSHIP GOD.†* These are familiar samples of the texts which establish a *general* principle of our religion, and which sufficiently exclude the idea of any participation with God, by other beings, of the homage to be rendered up, in any shape, by his intelligent creatures. But, with reference to the case of the Virgin, there is evidence more pointed and

* John x. 9; xiv. 6. In this country, within the walls of religious establishments to which Protestant children are consigned for their education, may be seen inscribed the words *Ave Maria, janua cæli*,—i. e., *Hail Mary, entrance-gate of heaven*. And in Roman Catholic books of devotion, the Virgin is addressed as *Queen of Heaven*, (a singular co-incidence with Jer. vii. 18, where the corruptions of the true religion under the earlier covenant are described,) with multitudes of titles and epithets clearly pertaining to deity alone. In fact, it is notorious that in some parts of Christendom the Virgin is far more prominent, as an object of faith and worship, than CHRIST.

2 Kings xvii. is a very instructive chapter. See the last verse.

Since I penned the foregoing note, I have read that portion of the present Bishop of Vermont's new and powerful work, *The End of Controversy Controverted* (Padney & Russell, New York), which exhibits the real amount and character of the worship offered to the Virgin; and, among modern and easily accessible publications, none perhaps can be more advantageously consulted for satisfaction upon this subject. In fact, the whole book is a complete and victorious exposure of the fallacies and misstatements of Milner's well-known *End of Controversy*, which is extensively used as an engine of proselytism in the hands of the Church of Rome.

Very able and excellent small publications and *tracts* adapted to the counteraction of this proselytism may be had at the Quebec Repository of the *Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge*, now established, under the auspices of the Diocesan Church Society, at *Miss Wood's, St. John Street, near the corner of St. Stanislaus Street, within the city walls*.

† Rev. xxii. 8, 9.

precise; and, as in the instance of the one sacrifice of Christ once and for ever offered upon the cross, there appears to have been, in certain marked repetitions which are found in the seventh, ninth, and tenth chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews,* a safeguard provided against the foreseen error and perversion of maintaining the continued iteration of that sacrifice by the hands of priests, as in the sacrifice of the Mass,—so in the instance here before us, our blessed Lord himself seems to have taken pains, if so we may speak of him, to leave upon record some especial provision against the error of investing his mother with attributes which belong to deity alone, or treating her as anything more than plainly and commonly human.

One example is found in the check which he gives to her impatience, upon occasion of the marriage in Cana of Galilee: *Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.*† Roman Catholic writers would escape from the force of this passage by rendering it differently; and in the Douay English Bible it stands, *Woman, what is that to me and to thee?* But, in so doing, they in fact strengthen the argument

* vii. 27; ix. 12 and 25 to end of chapter; x. 10, 11, 12, 14. The expiring words of the Redeemer, *IT IS FINISHED*, apply solemnly to the case.

† John ii. 4.

against themselves ; for they admit, by implication, that *as we render it* it makes against them, and yet, in other passages, it will be found that they themselves have rendered the same original phrase as having the force which we give it here,* and that this is a correct rendering, is that of which any man who is a scholar may readily be satisfied.

Again, when our Lord is interrupted while engaged in teaching, by being told that his *MOTHER and his brethren stand without, desiring to speak with him*, he uses these remarkable words, first asking, *WHO is my MOTHER, and who are my brethren?* and then adding, with an indication of his disciples, *Behold my MOTHER and my brethren ; for whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and MOTHER.*†

Is it possible to conceive that our Saviour could have spoken such words as these, if he had intended that his disciples should maintain on

* In Matt. viii. 29, the phrase, *What have we to do with thee?* is the same in the original as that used in John ii. 4, and is *there* rendered in the Douay Bible as *we* render it in *both* places. Two other remarkable examples may be mentioned of translation, in that Bible, accommodated to the doctrine of the later ages of the Church of Rome,—one occurring in Matt. iv. 17, where we find the rendering, *Do penance ; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*, (and so elsewhere, where repentance is spoken of); the other in Eph. v. 32, where the sense is given, *This is a great sacrament*, in speaking of marriage.

† Matt. xii. 46-50.

behalf of his mother, those claims which, in fact, make her a goddess and nothing else ?

Once more,—a woman of the company which follows him, lifts up her voice and says (what was true in itself), *Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. But he said, Yea rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.**

The blessedness, therefore, of all who hear the word of God and keep it, is greater than that of having brought Christ into the world and having nursed him ; and the Virgin herself, who, beyond all doubt, was of this happy number, was more blessed in this point than in the other which constituted her peculiar privilege.

We see, then, that her being declared by the angel to be *blessed among women* does not make her an object of worship. And if it really did, we must, in addition to the three supposed varieties of legitimate homage, † one of which is to

* Luke xi. 27, 28.

† *Latria* for the Supreme God; *Dulia* for the canonized Saints generally; *Hyper-dulia* for the Virgin, distinguishingly and pre-eminently. It is not meant, of course, by the adduction of the words respecting Jael, actually to rate her blessedness higher than that of the Virgin, on account of the accidental difference of the phrase used respectively in the two cases; but it is merely intended to shew the fallacy of building the idea of homage or invocation upon any such phrases at all.

Abraham is called *the friend of God*, (2 Chron. xx. 7; Is. xli. 8; Jas. ii. 23). Moses is mentioned as having been spoken with, by the Almighty, *face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend*, (Ex. xxxiii. 11). David is described as *a man after God's own heart*, (1 Sam. xiii. 14; Acts xiii. 22.)

be assigned to the Virgin, find some higher distinction for the benefit of *Jael*, the wife of Heber the Kenite; for, whereas it is said of the Virgin that she should be blessed *among* women,—that she shall be blessed *above* women is what we find affirmed of *Jael*.*

We will not farther pursue the subject. We will refrain from the appeal to Christian antiquity: we will forbear, with reference, in particular, to the newly proclaimed dogma, from citing the strong condemnation of the opinion which it imposes, by men of former ages, who have been canonized as Saints by the Church of Rome:†

Daniel is addressed as, *O man, greatly beloved*, by the same *Angel Gabriel* who was sent to the Virgin Mary, and is charged in the same way not to fear, (Dan. ix. 23; x. 11, 19). St. John is distinguished as *the disciple whom Jesus loved*, (John xiii. 23; xix. 26; xx. 2; xxi. 7, 20). St. Paul speaks of himself as having been *caught up to the third heaven and into Paradise*, (2 Cor. xii. 2, 3, 4). These expressions, or these statements, denote extraordinary favor and privilege, but favor and privilege still leaving the subject of them, in each case, as our frail fellow mortal in this world, saved by grace in the other. The cases of Enoch and Elijah, though cases of men translated to heaven without undergoing the stroke of death, fall within the same category.

It is a happy day when devout and conscientious professors of the Romish faith can be brought, without pre-possession, party spirit, or self-interest, seeking aid from the Father of lights, to look closely into the grounds of their own peculiar tenets, and to trace, historically, the gradual accumulation of these in the Church. They then find, among many similar examples, that *Canonization* is simply the re-production, in a new form, of the old Pagan *Apotheosis*.

* Judges v. 24.

† St. Bernard is particularly vehement against the opinion in question; but it stands condemned, directly or indirectly, in the writings of many other canonized Saints. Two very excellent articles upon the new dogma, in the shape of strictures upon a sermon preached by a Dr. Forbes, who is a deserter from our Communion, may be seen in two consecutive numbers,

we will not stop to point out that the proceeding itself, in the manner of establishing this strange article of faith, has been subversive of principles received and acknowledged in that Church; it is enough that the belief enjoined in this article, together with all which concerns the worship of the Virgin, is **PLAINLY IRRECONCILE-ABLE WITH THE WORD OF THE LIVING GOD.** And it is awful to think of the denunciations aimed in that word, against all who tamper with it, either in the way of addition, subtraction, or perversion.

My brethren, the preservation of the truth of God in its purity, ought to be dearer to us than life, and we must, upon due occasion, be ready *earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the Saints.** But gladly leaving the field of controversy, let us now, in conclusion, make some brief practical application to ourselves of the words spoken to the Virgin, *Fear not, for thou hast found favor with God.*

(the issues of the 15th and 22nd of the present month of March,) of the *New York Church Journal*, a paper which is taken to some extent in this City, and is regularly left at the library in St. Anne Street. It is really wonderful to think that this dogma is *first found out in the middle of the 19th century* to be an *Article of the Christian Faith*, which the Pope, without even the pretence of a General Council, now makes it binding upon the soul of every Romanist to believe. Where is this to end, while God shall permit Romanism to stand, and what becomes of the vaunt of an unchanging and unchangeable faith? The next dogma looked for is the *Assumption* of the Virgin into heaven.

* Jude 3.

Fear, as conveying the idea of the profoundest reverence and awe, is felt by the holy Angels themselves, in approaching God ; and in the human subject, the consciousness of sin gives that character to fear in connection with the thought of God, which points to the expectation of suffering under the divine vengeance. A shadowy dread, an instinctive disposition to recoil, attaches in the mind of man, *generally*, to the unseen world and its inhabitants. The terrors of an unappeased conscience, and the stings of remorse, in full and sharpened activity, are apt to afford the strongest exemplification of these feelings. But man, at best, is a sinner, and stands as a sinner, responsible before an all-holy God. How is he to discard his *fear* and to *find favor* with that God? That is the great, the absorbing want of a being who has an immortal soul, who has eternity before him. And that is the want which the Saviour Christ supplies. If we are *in Christ*, if, having been engrafted into the covenant by the appointed means, we *repent* and *believe*, with all that is truly enveloped in those two words, we are safe—not that we are to cease fearing to do wrong, not that we are to forget the *working out of our salvation with fear and trembling*,* in the sense of watchful solicitude

* Phil. ii. 12.

and consciousness of native inability ; but that if that *blessedness* belongs to us which is pronounced upon those who *hear the word of God and keep it*, who *live by the faith of the Son of God, the life which they live in the flesh*,* then we make better and better approaches to the state of *perfect love* which *casteth out fear* : † we pass all our burthen to Him who is *mighty to save*, and trust that He will carry us through to the end. Then, if there be something wafted to us which seems to put us into close contact with the other world, we hear, as it were, a comforting and re-assuring voice, *It is I, be not afraid*. ‡ Whatever clouds may cross the brightness of our day, whatever misgivings or despondent thoughts the feeling of our own unworthiness may sometimes inspire, we do not wholly lose our confidence : we recover our tone : we appropriate, not in boastfulness for ourselves, but in fulness of reliance upon the graciousness and power of our God and Saviour, the words of sacred and reviving encouragement addressed in distant and different ages to his faithful servants, *Fear not, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward*. § *Fear not, for I have redeemed thee ; I have called thee by thy name, thou art MINE*. ||

* Gal. ii. 20.

† 1 John iv. 18.

‡ Matt. xiv. 27.

§ Gen. xv. 1.

|| Is. xliii. 1.

